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The Honorable Solomon P. Ortiz
Chairman
Subcommittee on Readiness
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Subject: Military Training: Navy and Air Force Need to More Fully Apply Best Practices to Enhance Development and Management of Combat Skills Training

Since September 11, 2001, U.S. military forces have sought to adapt to an expanded battlefield—one in which rear areas are no longer considered safe and secure. As a result, both the Navy and the Air Force determined that, in order to prepare to operate more effectively in combat, servicemembers in specific occupations required additional standardized combat skills training in such areas as land navigation, first aid, and weapons qualification. The Navy has developed and implemented the Expeditionary Combat Skills (ECS) course for select Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) personnel. Through ECS, NECC intended to standardize the training curricula and eliminate inefficiencies and wide divergences in existing combat skills training. To provide similar training to designated enlisted personnel, the Air Force began planning the Common Battlefield Airmen Training (CBAT) program, but decided to cancel the program in August 2008, which was during the course of our work. Despite the Air Force's decision, we included in this report an analysis of CBAT to identify lessons learned applicable to ongoing and future Air Force efforts to establish new training programs.

We were asked to review issues related to the Navy's and the Air Force's efforts to expand combat skills training. Based on discussions with your staff, we focused specifically on ECS and CBAT. In evaluating these programs, we relied on best practices drawn from the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)¹ and GAO's prior work. We specifically examined (1) the Navy's approach in developing and implementing ECS, including its underlying rationale and application of management-framework best practices, and (2) the Air Force's approach in planning for CBAT, including application of management-framework best practices, and the basis for its

¹Pub. L. No. 103-62 (1993).

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decision to cancel the program. Enclosure I provides information about Navy and Air Force efforts to enhance combat skills during Basic Military Training.

To assess the extent to which the Navy and the Air Force followed management-framework best practices in planning, developing, and implementing their expanded combat skills programs we compared actions the Navy and Air Force took to develop their new combat skills training programs with best practices such as the use of mission statements, clear goals, and implementation strategies with timelines. With regard to ECS, we reviewed and analyzed relevant Navy policies and course documents, interviewed service officials, and observed actual training in Gulfport, Mississippi. To assess the Air Force's approach in planning for CBAT, we reviewed and analyzed relevant policies and draft course documents and we interviewed service officials regarding the rationale for developing, and ultimately canceling, CBAT. Additional information about our scope and methodology can be found in enclosure II.

We conducted this performance audit from November 2007 to January 2009 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Results in Brief

The Navy has developed a mission statement and clear program goals for ECS, but it has not established an implementation strategy with a timeline for achieving these goals. Furthermore, Navy training development policies do not specifically require that commands establish implementation strategies with timelines when establishing new training programs. However, our prior work has shown that an effective management-framework can be achieved by following best practices such as developing a mission statement, clear program goals, and an implementation strategy with timelines for achieving these goals. NECC has identified its mission for ECS: to provide basic combat skills training to NECC personnel. Further, NECC has established the goals of the program: (1) to provide standardized, basic, combat skills training to all personnel entering NECC communities; (2) to provide training for forces that lack formalized entry-level, individual combat skills training; and (3) to establish a training pipeline for all expeditionary forces. However, NECC currently lacks an implementation strategy with a timeline for fully achieving these goals. NECC's goal is to train all personnel that enter the command—estimated to be about 4,800 each year. However, approximately 1,300 NECC personnel attended ECS in fiscal year 2008 and the course is scheduled to reach a maximum training capacity of 3,000 in fiscal year 2012. Further, reserve component personnel account for more than 40 percent of the annual new NECC personnel, but few reservists have attended ECS to date. While the Navy had considered ways to train over 5,000 personnel per year, officials stated that they did not pursue those approaches due to resource constraints, and NECC currently does not have capacity to reach its desired goal. Furthermore, NECC does not have a strategy with timelines to significantly increase reserve component participation in the future. Without an implementation strategy that includes a timeline for providing ECS training to all personnel entering NECC's communities, differences in individuals' combat skills training will continue to

exist. Moreover, in the absence of a specific requirement within Navy training policy, the service does not have assurances that future training programs will have implementation strategies with timelines. Therefore, we recommend that the Navy establish and apply guidance that mandates creating an implementation strategy with a timeline to fully achieve program goals when developing new training programs.

While the Air Force developed a mission statement for CBAT before canceling the program, it did not establish clear goals and an implementation strategy with timelines, in accordance with management-framework best practices. It also did not tie the need for the expansion of CBAT training to an identified gap in combat skills training, knowledge, and abilities, which in part contributed to the program's cancellation when the program was reviewed after a change in leadership. In the course of planning for CBAT, the Air Force's original goals for the program changed radically. When the program was conceived in 2003, its goals were to (1) annually provide standardized training to approximately 1,400 airmen within seven "battlefield airmen" occupational specialties, and (2) assist in retaining airmen within these seven occupations. However, the program goals were not firmly established because the Air Force greatly expanded the program without formally identifying a training deficiency or validating the need for the expanded program. By 2007, Air Force plans called for approximately 16,000 airmen from more than 50 occupational specialties to attend CBAT training each year. While Air Force policy governing the development of training programs includes processes that require validation of training requirements, those processes were not followed with respect to CBAT. In addition, this Air Force policy does not specifically require the establishment of clearly defined goals. In the absence of clear program goals, in 2008, newly appointed senior Air Force leaders cancelled CBAT. The Air Force is now beginning to develop a new training program that will mirror CBAT's original program goal of providing standardized combat skills training to personnel in seven battlefield airmen occupations. However, the Air Force has yet to validate the need for the program. Because Air Force policy does not address the need for clear goals it is unknown to what extent the new plans for the standardization of training for seven occupational specialties could expand again. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent the efforts of the past 5 years will be used in the development of the new combat skills training program. Therefore, we recommend that the Air Force develop guidance that requires clear goals to guide and monitor the development of new training programs.

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD disagreed with one recommendation, partially agreed with a second, and fully agreed with our final recommendation. DOD did not concur with our recommendation that the Navy establish guidance that mandates creating an implementation strategy with a timeline to fully achieve program goals when developing new training programs. DOD acknowledges the Navy lacked an implementation strategy, but emphasized it already had procedures for establishing new training programs. However, these procedures do not specifically require the development of implementation strategies nor do they address how program goals will be achieved or milestones for measuring program performance. Furthermore, a key goal of ECS is to provide standardized training to NECC's forces but it remains unclear when, if ever, the Navy will achieve this goal since it lacks an implementation strategy with timelines for achieving the goal. Therefore, we continue to believe that our recommendation is valid.

Background

The services have several options for increasing the combat skills of their personnel throughout a military career. They can utilize basic military training, foundational skills training, or predeployment training. Servicemembers attend basic military training after joining a service, and attend foundational training once they are assigned a military occupation, prior to arrival at their first permanent military duty station. Prior to deploying in support of a military operation, servicemembers attend predeployment training.

Navy

In September 2005, the Chief of Naval Operations approved the establishment of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) and designated it a subordinate command to the U.S. Atlantic Fleet (later consolidated and renamed as Fleet Forces Command). Fleet Forces Command is responsible for overall coordination, establishment, and implementation of integrated requirements and policies for manning, equipping, and training both Atlantic and Pacific fleet units—including NECC units. Development of individual training and the determination of how to train individuals is the responsibility of Chief of Naval Operations N1 (Navy Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education) and the Naval Education and Training Command.

NECC is the single functional command responsible for the readiness, resources, manning, training, and equipping of the Navy's expeditionary forces. The expeditionary force capabilities resident within NECC are: Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Maritime Expeditionary Security, Riverine,² Expeditionary Diving Operations, Naval Construction, Maritime Civil Affairs, Expeditionary Training, Expeditionary Logistics Support, Expeditionary Intelligence, Combat Camera, Expeditionary Guard, and Expeditionary Combat Readiness.

In 2006, the Navy began developing the Expeditionary Combat Skills (ECS) training program. ECS, a 20-day course offered at a Navy base in Gulfport, Mississippi, was designed to provide basic combat skills to all personnel entering NECC. The Navy piloted ECS in 2007 and began the first official course in March 2008. For more information on ECS, see enclosure IV.

Air Force

With guidance from the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff, the Air Force's Air Education and Training Command develops new Air Force training programs. The Air Education and Training Command is responsible for recruiting, training, and educating airmen and provides basic military training, initial and advanced technical training, flight training, and professional military and degree-granting professional education.

² The Navy's Riverine force conducts maritime security operations and theater security cooperation in a river area of operations or other suitable location.

Since CBAT's cancellation in August 2008, the Air Force has been working to develop a new combat skills training program that will somewhat mirror the intent of the original program by providing foundational training to personnel in seven designated battlefield airmen specialties. However, most occupational specialties in the Air Force will continue to receive their combat skills training through basic military and predeployment training.

Principles of an Effective Management Framework

In our previous reporting regarding management-framework best practices, we have noted that GPRA³ provides agencies with a framework for effectively implementing and managing programs.⁴ The framework can include various management tools such as long-term goals and strategies to accomplish those goals. In addition, GPRA requires agencies to develop strategic plans in which they define their missions, establish outcome-related goals, and identify how the goals will be achieved. Specifically, in our prior work we found that best practices include: (1) a mission statement, which brings a program into focus; (2) clear goals, which explain the results the program is intended to achieve; and (3) an implementation strategy, which elaborates on specific actions the agency is taking or plans to take, including a timeline that outlines how goals will be achieved.⁵

The Navy Developed a Mission Statement and Established Clear Program Goals for ECS, but Lacks an Implementation Strategy

The Navy applied some management-framework best practices in the development of ECS by developing a mission statement and establishing clear program goals, but the service lacks an implementation strategy with a timeline to ensure that it meets these goals. Furthermore, Navy training development policies do not require that the Navy develop an implementing strategy with timelines for achieving its stated goals. Moreover, NECC is currently not training all designated personnel through ECS and has not developed a strategy that indicates when it will be able to incorporate all personnel into the program.

The Navy Clearly Defined Its Mission and Goals in Developing ECS

Following the establishment of NECC in 2005, the command identified an urgent and compelling requirement for existing training to be consolidated and for forces under NECC's command to receive training that provided standardized, common, and basic combat skills. According to Navy officials, prior to the development of ECS, NECC training was inefficient and stove-piped, and personnel were emerging with divergent levels of combat skills proficiency. Identifying this gap in knowledge, skills, and abilities, NECC created ECS to address these needs. While not required by service policies

³Pub. L. No. 103-62 (1993).

⁴GAO, *Military Transformation: Clear Leadership, Accountability, and Management Tools Are Needed to Enhance DOD's Efforts to Transform Military Capabilities* [GAO-05-70](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec.17, 2004).

⁵GAO, *Agencies Strategic Plans Under GPRA: Key Questions to Facilitate Congressional Review* [GAO/GGD-10.1.16](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 1997), and GAO, *Managing for Results: Critical Issues for Improving Federal Agencies' Strategic Plans* [GAO/GGD-97-180](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 16, 1997).

governing the development of training programs⁶ at the time, in 2006 NECC had the need for ECS approved by its parent command—Fleet Forces Command. The mission for ECS was clear: to provide eligible personnel with the basic expeditionary combat training necessary to perform high-risk security operations when assigned to NECC. Likewise, NECC developed specific goals for ECS: (1) to provide initial, standardized, common core, basic, individual combat skills training to all personnel entering NECC communities; (2) provide training for forces that lack formalized entry-level, individual combat skills training; and (3) establish a training pipeline for all expeditionary forces.

During the development of the program, the NECC commander directed that all personnel entering NECC and filling sea duty billets attend ECS en route to their first assignment.⁷ Although all new personnel filling sea duty billets are scheduled to attend ECS, personnel who have received combat skills training similar to the training provided in ECS, such as Marine Corps School of Infantry training for Riverines, will not attend. Also, personnel who have been assigned to NECC for more than 1 year and have completed an operational deployment will not attend the course.

Navy Lacks Strategy with Timelines for Fully Implementing ECS

NECC established priorities for servicemembers to attend ECS.⁸ However, NECC's goal of providing ECS training to all of its new personnel in sea duty billets—approximately 4,800 personnel annually—is not being met, and the command has no implementation strategy with timelines to meet its goals. While the Navy had considered ways to train over 5,000 personnel per year, it abandoned those approaches due to resource constraints and currently has no plans to develop a strategy with timelines for reaching its goal of training all incoming personnel. Further, the Navy policies governing the development of training programs that were in effect when ECS was developed did not require commands to create an implementation strategy with a timeline for achieving the overall goals of the program.⁹ Table 1 provides a breakdown of ECS's projected number of personnel trained and expected number of personnel who will not attend ECS each fiscal year.

⁶Naval Education and Training Command Manual (NAVEDTRA) 130A, *Task Based Curriculum Development Manual*, vol. 1 (July 1997) (cancelled), and NAVEDTRA 135B, *Navy School Management Manual* (September 2000).

⁷ Sea duty billets are positions aboard (1) commissioned vessels, (2) deployable squadrons, (3) shore stations and staffs that require members to operate away from their duty station more than 150 days per year, or (4) shore assignments in certain undesirable geographic areas.

⁸ The ECS priorities, generally by unit type, are as follows: (1) Naval Construction personnel; (2) immediate deployers; (3) personnel most probable to require combat skills during their deployment who do not have existing combat skills training in their current training pipelines; (4) Riverines; (5) Maritime Expeditionary Security Force; (6) Maritime Civil Affairs Group; (7) Combat Camera; (8) Expeditionary Training Command; (9) Navy Expeditionary Intelligence Command; (10) Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group; and (11) Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Mobile Diving and Salvage Units.

⁹NAVEDTRA 130A and NAVEDTRA 135B. Despite revisions to these policies, the current service policy – Naval Education and Training Command Instruction (NETCINST) 1510.1, *Navy Training Management* (February 7, 2007)--still does not require a strategy with timelines to fully achieve program goals.

Table 1: Projected Number of New NECC Personnel Attending ECS Compared to the Number of New NECC Personnel That Will Not Attend ECS

Fiscal year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Estimated number of personnel entering NECC in sea duty billets	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800
Annual projected number of personnel attending ECS	1,300	2,400	2,400	2,400	3,000
Annual number of personnel entering NECC in sea duty billets not attending ECS	3,500	2,400	2,400	2,400	1,800

Source: GAO analysis of NECC data.

Note: The annual number of personnel not attending ECS represents the maximum number of new NECC personnel who may not attend ECS each year. This actual number is likely to be lower because some new personnel may not attend the program as a result of having similar training.

As shown in table 1, in fiscal year 2008, approximately 1,300 personnel attended ECS, and the program is scheduled to achieve a maximum capacity of 3,000 in fiscal year 2012. With the current expected program capacity, each fiscal year some new NECC personnel will not attend ECS. While the projected deficits in training slots each year are likely to result in growing numbers of untrained personnel, the exact numbers are uncertain because personnel may leave NECC or the Navy, or may receive similar training prior to deploying with their NECC unit.

While NECC established priorities for ECS attendance, the command is not currently providing the training program to all designated personnel in those established priorities, and it has not developed a strategy that indicates when these individuals will begin to attend the program. Although NECC has established these priorities, to date not all personnel in Naval Construction, which has first priority, have attended the program. When ECS became operational in March 2008, Naval Construction personnel on the East Coast attended the course as dictated by the priority system. In contrast, Naval Construction personnel from the West Coast did not attend the course, despite being part of the first priority group. According to Navy officials, Naval Construction personnel from the West Coast are scheduled to begin attending ECS in fiscal year 2009, and the Navy plans for West Coast personnel to attend the program at the same rate as their counterparts on the East Coast. Officials also noted that NECC is phasing out its use of priorities for ECS attendance in fiscal year 2009 and all active component members in sea duty billets will be attending the course.

Of the 4,800 personnel entering into NECC annually, about 2,100 are members of the reserve component. Although reserve component personnel make up nearly half of all new NECC personnel, the Navy sent less than 10 percent of new reserve component personnel to ECS in fiscal year 2008, and it has not developed a plan for when all reserve component personnel will attend the program. Navy officials indicated that they are currently conducting working groups to determine how to provide ECS to NECC reserve

component personnel in sea duty billets. However, NECC has not yet resolved issues, such as reserve component availability due to annual training restrictions. Officials stated that NECC may have to build additional capacity at the ECS facility in Gulfport, Mississippi, or build a new ECS training facility in order to accommodate the reserves. However, NECC has not developed a timeline to indicate when it will add this capacity or build the new training facility.

The Air Force Did Not Establish Clear Goals for CBAT

While the Air Force developed a mission statement for CBAT before canceling the program, it did not establish clear goals and an implementation strategy with timelines, in accordance with management-framework best practices. It also did not tie the need for the expansion of CBAT training to an identified gap in combat skills training, knowledge, and abilities, which contributed to the program's cancellation when the Air Force reviewed the program after a change in leadership in 2008. We have previously reported that an effective management-framework requires a mission statement, clear goals, and an implementation strategy with timelines.¹⁰ The report accompanying GPRA noted that when an organization clearly defines its goals, these goals will better enable the organization to maintain a consistent sense of direction, even after a change in leadership.¹¹ While the Air Force policy that governs the development of training programs includes processes that require the validation of performance and training requirements, such as method of instruction and frequency of training, through review panels, those processes were not followed with respect to CBAT. Further, Air Force policy does not specifically require the establishment of clearly defined goals.¹² Although initially CBAT had specific goals based on the need to standardize training for seven Air Force occupations, the need for the program was never formally validated. Further, the expanded CBAT program, which would have included three different combat skills courses for 16,000 airmen, was not directly tied to existing training deficiencies and therefore lacked clear goals, and the expanded CBAT program concept was never formally validated. Independently verifying the need for the CBAT program could have limited the Air Force's ability to unnecessarily expand the program. In the absence of this validation and clear program goals, Air Force officials stated that newly appointed Air Force senior leadership determined that CBAT was no longer necessary and, after 5 years, the program was cancelled in 2008.

As shown in table 2, the Air Force's CBAT program concept did not maintain consistent goals over time and expanded in 2006 with new Air Force senior leadership. When Air Force senior leadership changed again in 2008, there was a shift in emphasis from providing foundational training to providing predeployment training.

¹⁰GAO/GGD-10.1.16, GAO/GGD-97-180, and GAO-05-70.

¹¹S. Rpt. No. 103-58 (1993).

¹²See, for example, Air Force Instruction 36-2201 v.1, *Air Force Training Program, Training Development, Delivery, and Evaluation* (Oct. 1, 2002), and Air Force Instruction 36-2201 v.6, *Air Force Training Program, Total Force Training and Education Review Process (TFTERP)* (Sept. 27, 2002).

Table 2: Timeline for CBAT Program Concept

2003-2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Initial planning for the consolidation of training across ground warrior airmen occupations, based on lessons learned.	<p>*New Air Force senior leaders in late 2005</p> <p>Air Force Instruction designates seven Air Force occupations as battlefield airmen, approximately 4,300 airmen.</p> <p>Air Force begins development of CBAT program course documents.</p>	CBAT program concept expanded from initial 1,400 airmen—seven occupational specialties—attending annually to more than 16,000 airmen—more than 50 occupational specialties—attending annually.	Air Force continues developing expanded CBAT program course documents.	<p>*New Air Force senior leaders in late 2008</p> <p>CBAT program cancelled.</p> <p>Air Force begins initial planning for new combat skills course for battlefield airmen.</p>

Source: GAO analysis of Air Force information.

As shown in table 2, in 2005 the Air Force designated seven occupational specialties as battlefield airmen through a policy directive.¹³ Battlefield airmen are those airmen that routinely operate outside the defended perimeter of an Air Force installation and in hostile, uncertain environments. The battlefield airmen occupations include: Combat Rescue Officers, Special Tactics Officers, Pararescue Airmen, Combat Control Airmen, Tactical Control Personnel, Special Operations Weather Team Airmen/Officers, and Battlefield Weather Airmen/Officers. Using lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom regarding the varying levels of capabilities among the battlefield airmen occupational specialties, the Air Force sought to identify commonalties in training for inclusion in a shared training program. As a result, CBAT, which was intended to directly follow Basic Military Training, was developed to (1) provide baseline combat skills for all battlefield airmen candidates, and (2) assist in retaining airmen in these occupational specialties by providing training to enable them to change among specialties.

In 2006, under new Air Force senior leadership, the CBAT program expanded to include more than 50 additional Air Force occupational specialties. As determined by Air Force occupational specialty managers, airmen in occupations with the highest probability of deploying outside the defended perimeter of an Air Force installation would have attended the expanded CBAT training program. According to Air Force officials, the expanded CBAT program would have provided these airmen with combat skills training beyond what they were already receiving during Basic Military Training and ensured that they would be trained as warrior airmen on common, foundational, ground combat skills

¹³ Air Force Policy Directive 10-35, *Battlefield Airmen* (Feb. 4, 2005).

that supported current and future combat operations. However, Air Force officials stated that this expansion was not based on identified training deficiencies. Further, the expansion of CBAT from its original goals of standardization and retention of battlefield airmen was also not validated, and the initial goals of CBAT were overshadowed by much larger training goals. Over the next 2 years, the Air Force's Air Education and Training Command continued developing the CBAT program for specific Air Force occupations, planning for three training courses—a 10, 15, and 20-day program.

When Air Force senior leadership changed again in August 2008, the CBAT program was cancelled later that same month. According to senior Air Force officials, the program was cancelled because CBAT would not meet combatant commander requirements and the combat skills taught in the program would need to be refreshed prior to deployment. Officials stated that another factor contributing to the cancellation of CBAT was that since 2003 the Air Force had developed and initiated nine training programs and courses to enhance combat skills¹⁴ and had enhanced the combat skills training in its Basic Military Training. For additional information on the combat skills enhancements to Basic Military Training, please see enclosure I.

As noted by the report that accompanied GPRA, when an organization clearly defines its goals, these goals will better enable it to maintain a consistent sense of direction, even if a change in leadership brings a shift in philosophy.¹⁵ Although the Air Force had specific goals for its initial CBAT program, the concept was not validated as the program expanded and its goals were never clearly redefined. Further, the need for the expanded CBAT program was not based on training deficiencies and was not validated. As a result, the need for the initial CBAT program concept was never formally established, and CBAT was allowed to expand unchecked.

In August 2008, 5 years after the Air Force began its initial planning for CBAT, the program was cancelled. In developing the CBAT program concept the Air Force did not identify a training deficiency, have the need for the training program validated, or develop clear goals. Now, the Air Force is working to develop the Battlefield Airmen Screening Course, which will mirror the original goals of the CBAT program. However, officials stated that they do not expect it to be implemented before 2013 due to the service's inability to request formal funding for the new training course until 2012. According to officials, the Air Force intends to validate the course's performance and training requirements, but has yet to do so.

¹⁴The Air Force's nine training programs are: (1) Advanced Contingency Skills Training course; (2) Advanced Expeditionary Skills Training course; (3) the Air Advisor course; (4) EST focused Air and Space Basic Course; (5) Basic Combat Convey Course; (6) CBAT-Bridge; (7) Evasion and Conduct After Capture/Survival (hands-on SERE training for some select Air Force occupations) and Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape 100 (computer-based SERE training for all airmen); (8) the 19-hours of Wing Training; and (9) the Battlefield Airmen Screening Course.

¹⁵S. Rpt. No. 103-58 (1993).

Conclusions

While both the Navy and the Air Force have taken steps to better prepare servicemembers to operate more effectively in hostile ground locations by providing enhanced combat skills training, neither of the services have yet developed combat skills training programs that fully incorporate key elements of a successful management-framework. In developing ECS, NECC established a mission statement and clear goals; however it did not develop an implementation strategy with a timeline indicating when it expects to achieve these goals. Until NECC establishes an implementation strategy with a timeline that indicates when all new active and reserve NECC personnel will attend ECS, wide divergences in the combat skills training provided to NECC personnel will continue. Moreover, with no policy requirement to develop a timeline within which a training program is to achieve its stated goals, the Navy risks developing training programs that will be only partially implemented.

While the Air Force developed a mission statement for CBAT and had specific goals for its initial CBAT program, the concept was not validated as the program expanded and its goals were never clearly redefined. Further, the need for the expanded CBAT program was not based on training deficiencies and was not validated. As we have previously reported, clear goals are the starting point and foundation for what the agency seeks to accomplish. Without independently verifying the need for a training program, it is vulnerable to the changing philosophies of new leadership. Furthermore, without a requirement to establish clear goals, it is unknown to what extent the revived plans for the standardized training of seven occupational specialties could expand again. It is also unclear to what, if any, extent the efforts of the past 5 years will be used in the development of the new combat skills training program, the Battlefield Airmen Screening Course, which will somewhat mirror the intent of the original CBAT program.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To facilitate the development of training courses, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct

the Secretary of the Navy to (1) establish guidance that mandates creating an implementation strategy with a timeline to fully achieve program goals when developing new training programs, and (2) ensure in consultation with the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations N1 (Navy Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education) and Fleet Forces Command, that the Naval Education and Training Command apply this guidance and establish milestones and identify resources needed to fully implement the ECS program goal of training active and reserve component personnel as required by NECC; and

the Secretary of the Air Force to develop guidance that requires clear goals to guide and monitor the development of new training programs; in addition, the Air Force should ensure that it validates the need for future training programs, such as the Battlefield Airmen Screening Course.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD disagreed with one recommendation, partially agreed with a second, and fully agreed with our final recommendation. DOD did not concur with our recommendation that the Navy establish guidance that mandates creating an implementation strategy with a timeline to fully achieve program goals when developing new training programs. In its comments, DOD acknowledged that ECS lacked an implementation strategy with timelines but said this was due to the rapid stand up of the course due to exigencies of the Global War on Terrorism. It also noted that it had procedures in place for establishing new training programs. We note that the procedures cited by DOD (i.e. fully funding appropriate initial training for system acquisitions and planning and budgeting through Program Objective Memoranda and the Future Years Defense Program) are processes by which programs will be developed and funded. However, these procedures do not specifically require the development of implementation strategies nor do they address how program goals will be achieved or milestones for measuring program performance. Furthermore, a key goal of ECS is to provide standardized training to NECC's forces but it remains unclear when, if ever, the Navy will fully achieve this goal since it lacks an implementation strategy with timelines for achieving the goal. Therefore, we continue to believe that the Navy needs to establish and apply guidance that mandates creating an implementation strategy with a timeline to fully achieve program goals when developing new training programs.

DOD partially concurred with our recommendation that the Navy apply implementation strategy guidance and establish milestones and identify resources needed to fully implement the ECS program goal of training active and reserve component personnel. DOD suggested that we revise the language of our recommendation to reflect that the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations N1, has responsibilities related to ECS, in addition to the Naval Education and Training Command, Fleet Forces Command, and NECC. We have revised our recommendation to reflect DOD's comment.

DOD concurred with our final recommendation that the Air Force develop guidance that requires clear goals to guide and monitor the development of new training programs. DOD also stated that the Air Force has made several notable improvements in the oversight and validation process for combat skills training programs, such as the use of service councils to validate current and future training. DOD also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. DOD's comments are reprinted in enclosure III.

If you or your staffs have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9619 or pickups@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in enclosure V.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon L. Pickup". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharon L. Pickup
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Enclosures-5

Enclosure I: Basic Military Training

Since October 2001, the Navy and Air Force have made changes to their basic training programs in order to enhance the combat skills they provide to new recruits. The Air Force has made the most substantial changes to its program. In November 2008, the Air Force increased its Basic Military Training length from 6.5 to 8.5 weeks in order to decompress an overcongested schedule and add new and enhanced combat skills training. In 2006, the Navy changed from weapons familiarization to a weapons qualification course within its Basic Military Training to provide increased weapons skills to personnel.

Table 3: Navy and Air Force Basic Military Training

	Navy	Air Force
Approximate course length	8 weeks	8.5 weeks
Fiscal year 2007 personnel throughput	40,478	33,496
Increase to current Basic Military Training length	No increase since 2001	2008: Increased length by 2 weeks
New combat skills lessons added to Basic Military Training	No new combat skills lessons added to basic military training since 2001	2008: Added field training, training on M-9 pistol, and introduction to Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape 2005: Added issuance of trainer weapon to recruits, and base defense, role of warrior, mental preparation for combat, self-defense, leadership, and combat recovery lessons
Existing combat skills lessons enhanced in basic military training	2006: Switched from weapons familiarization to weapons qualification course	2008: Enhanced first-aid, base defense, and combat readiness lessons 2005: Enhanced first-aid lesson

Source: GAO analysis of Navy and Air Force information.

Enclosure II: Scope and Methodology

To examine the Navy's approach in developing and implementing its Expeditionary Combat Skills (ECS) program, including its underlying rationale and application of management-framework best practices, we obtained and analyzed available internal Navy regulations related to the development of new training programs.¹ In addition, we reviewed briefings and memorandums related to the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command's (NECC) initiatives to develop combat skills training. We identified key elements of management-framework best practices based on our prior work and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) to determine the extent to which the Navy applied these elements in the development of ECS.² We compared the three elements—mission statement, goals, and implementation strategy with timelines—to the actions taken by the Navy to develop ECS to determine the extent to which the Navy followed best practices. We interviewed officials within the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and the Navy to better understand DOD's process for developing and implementing new combat training programs. Specifically, we interviewed officials from the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, Naval Education and Training Command, and the Center for Security Forces. We analyzed Navy plans for developing and implementing ECS and interviewed relevant officials, including course instructors, to determine how these plans evolved following the course pilot. In addition, we observed actual ECS training at Gulfport, Mississippi. To obtain information on enhancements that the Navy has made to its Basic Military Training, we interviewed officials from Navy Service Training Command and Recruit Training Command.

To assess the Air Force's approach in planning for its Common Battlefield Airmen Training (CBAT) program, including its application of management-framework best practices and the basis for its decision to cancel the program, we obtained and analyzed available internal Air Force regulations related to the development of new training programs.³ In addition, we obtained and reviewed relevant memorandums, briefings, and draft course documents that were used in planning for CBAT. As previously stated, we relied on best practices drawn from the Government Performance and Result Act of 1993 and our prior work. Once identified, we compared these best practices to the steps taken by the Air Force to plan for CBAT to determine the extent to which the service applied these elements. In addition, we met with officials and observed training at the Common Battlefield Airmen Training-Bridge course. We interviewed relevant officials from Air Force headquarters and the Air Education and Training Command to discuss the development of CBAT and the subsequent reasons for the cancellation of the

¹ NETCINST 1510.1, Navy Training Management (Feb. 7, 2007); NAVEDTRA 130A, Task Based Curriculum Development Manual, vol. 1 (July 1997) (cancelled); and NAVEDTRA 135B, Navy School Management Manual (September 2000).

² GAO, *Agencies Strategic Plans Under GPRA: Key Questions to Facilitate Congressional Review*, [GAO/GGD-10.1.16](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 1997). GAO, *Managing for Results: Critical Issues for Improving Federal Agencies' Strategic Plans*, [GAO/GGD-97-180](#) (Sept. 16, 1997); and Pub. L. No. 103-62. GAO, *Military Transformation: Clear Leadership, Accountability, and Management Tools Are Needed to Enhance DOD's Efforts to Transform Military Capabilities*, [GAO-05-70](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 17, 2004).

³ Air Force Instruction 36-2201, vols. 1-6, *Air Force Training Program, Delivery, and Evaluation* (Oct. 1, 2002) and AETC Instruction 36-2203, *Technical and Basic Military Training Development* (Mar. 8, 2001).

program. To obtain information on changes that the Air Force made to enhance combat skills in its Basic Military Training, we reviewed training briefings and memorandums and interviewed officials from the 737th Training Group.

In addition, to obtain information on the coordination that occurred between the Navy and the Air Force and the other services in the planning and development of ECS and CBAT, respectively, we obtained and reviewed relevant briefings and memorandums from the services requesting coordination assistance. In addition, we interviewed relevant officials to discuss the coordination that occurred in the development of these combat skills training programs.

We conducted this performance audit from November 2007 through January 2009 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

In conducting this work, we contacted appropriate officials from the following organizations:

- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), Arlington, Virginia
- U.S. Joint Forces Command
 - Joint Warfighting Center, Suffolk, Virginia
- Interservice Training Review Organization, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas
- Department of the Army
 - Army Headquarters—Military Operations, Arlington, Virginia
 - Army Institutional Training Directorate, Arlington, Virginia
 - Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia
- Department of the Navy
 - Office of the Chief of Naval Operations N1 (Navy Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education, Arlington, Virginia)
 - U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia
 - Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, Norfolk, Virginia
 - Naval Education and Training Command, Pensacola, Florida
 - Center for Security Forces, Little Creek, Virginia
 - Expeditionary Combat Skills Course, Gulfport, Mississippi
 - Navy Service Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois
 - Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois

Enclosure II: Scope and Methodology

- Marine Corps Education and Training Command, Quantico, Virginia
- Department of the Air Force
 - Air Force Headquarters, Arlington, Virginia
 - Air and Education Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas
 - 737th Training Group, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas
 - Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois

Enclosure III: Comments from the Department of Defense



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

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Ms. Sharon L. Pickup
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This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the Government Accountability Office draft report GAO-09-220R, "Military Training: Navy and Air Force Need to More Fully Apply Best Practices to Enhance Development and Management of Combat Skills Training," dated December 12, 2008.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft. The DoD appreciates the GAO's assessment of the best practices used by the Navy and Air Force evaluating Combat Skills Training and have generated a response to the GAO's recommendations to the draft report.

DoD non concurs with Recommendation 1. We partially concur with Recommendation 2 citing inconsistencies pertaining to offices responsible for implementing training policy and suggested a revised recommendation. DoD concurs with Recommendation 3.

Detailed responses to the GAO recommendations are attached. We look forward to continuing work with the Congress and the GAO in this important functional area.

Sincerely,

Samuel D. Kleinman
Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Readiness)

Enclosure:
As stated



GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED DECEMBER 12, 2008
GAO CODE 351129/GAO-09-220R

“MILITARY TRAINING: Navy and Air Force Need to More Fully Apply Best Practices to Enhance Development and Management of Combat Skills Training”

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Navy to establish guidance that mandates an implementation strategy with a time line to fully achieve program goals when developing new training programs.

DOD RESPONSE: Non-concur:

To direct the Secretary of the Navy to establish new guidelines would be redundant to processes already in place for establishing new training programs and would not address the deficiency that GAO identified with Expeditionary Combat Skills (ECS) course. The lack of an implementation strategy with timelines was due to its rapid stand up which was dictated by the exigencies of the Navy's participation in the Global War on Terrorism.

Current procedures in place require the Navy to include processes to define the "implementation strategy with a timeline to fully achieve program goals." Training programs within the Navy are stood up through primarily two mechanisms:

- (1) Via the system acquisition process governed by DoD, Navy, and the Office of Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) directives. Navy directive require Systems Command program offices to fully fund appropriate initial training and to POM for lifecycle training, with a budgetary hand-off to the Training Executive Agent at a Ready-for-Training date.
- (2) Through fleet, manpower and personnel managers identifying and validating skills requirements that are budgeted and paid through the DoD's Program Objective Memorandum process over the Future Year Defense Program through warfare sponsors in OPNAV N8.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Navy, in consultation with Fleet Forces Command and the Naval Education and Training Command, direct that the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command applies this guidance and establishes milestones and identifies resources needed to fully implement the Expeditionary Combat Skills program goal of training active and reserve component personnel.

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) is not solely responsible for establishing milestones and identifying resources needed to fully implement the Expeditionary Combat Skills (ECS) program. Pursuant to U.S. Fleet Forces

Command's validation of ECS as a training requirement, Naval Personnel Development Command (NPDC) and Center for Security Forces (CENSECFOR) were asked to "develop an ECS course of instruction and pilot as soon as possible" in coordination with NECC (reference: USFFC SER N4/7A/018, dated September 8, 2006).

Responsibility for management, maintenance and implementation of training courses lies with the designated Learning Center (in this case, CENSECFOR). Oversight of the management and implementation of courses was the responsibility of NPDC, subject to approval by Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) and OPNAV N1 (Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education). CENSECFOR requested resource support for ECS during POM 10 deliberations but no resources were identified. PR 11 resource support has been requested and is pending adjudication.

Current guidance, promulgated since development of ECS began, formally delineated specific policy and guidance with respect to creating and resourcing new courses (Navy Training Management (NETCINST 1510.1, dated February 07, 2007) and Funding Requirements for New and Modified Training Courses (DCNO N1 SER N1/127189, dated September 15, 2008)). Resourcing new courses is now a collaborative effort between Navy Enterprises (in this case, Navy Expeditionary Combat Enterprise (NECE) and stakeholders that must be coordinated through and approved by OPNAV N15 via NETC.

In summary, suggest the recommendation be revised to read:

The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Navy, in consultation with OPNAV N1 and Fleet Forces Command, for the Naval Education and Training Command to apply this guidance and establish milestones and identify resources needed to fully implement the Expeditionary Combat Skills program goal of training active and reserve component personnel as required by the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Air Force to develop guidance that requires clear goals to guide and monitor the development of new training programs. In addition, the Air Force should ensure that it validates the need for future training programs, such as the Battlefield Airmen Screening Course.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur with comments:

As part of a continuing effort to ensure Air Force (AF) personnel have the training needed to meet Combatant Commander mission requirements, the AF has made several notable improvements in the oversight and validation process for expeditionary skills training programs.

The Air Force uses the USAF/CV-chaired Force Management and Development Council to validate current and future training programs. This work is accomplished through sub panels such as the Expeditionary Skills Senior Review Group (ESSRG). For example, the ESSRG validates requirements for new expeditionary skills (ES) training, provides oversight to synchronize and efficiently administer ES training, and addresses other corporate level ES

training issues. Updated guidance from AF/A1 describes the process by which expeditionary skills training is identified, validated, and executed. Once the expeditionary skills requirement is identified to the ESSRG, the ESSRG validates the requirement, with Force Management and Development Council (FMDC) oversight. The ESSRG tasks Air Education and Training Command (AETC), the AF Lead Command for training, to develop curriculum and resource the requirement. AETC provides the Plan of Instruction and trains instructors as well as performing quality assurance on executed instruction. Additionally, AETC conducts exit surveys to determine adequacy of training and adjusts curriculum accordingly to ensure the training has met program goals. AETC also works closely with the Air Force Expeditionary Center (EC) to incorporate the latest tactics, techniques, and procedures into curriculum. The overall AF strategy is to use a senior review group to validate requirements and a Lead Command for training to develop program goals and execute required training.

This strategy is replicated for other courses of instruction through the Air Force Learning Committee (AFLC). The AFLC is chartered to ensure senior level oversight of institutional training and education requirements. Specifically, the AFLC validates curriculum content across the Continuum of Learning to ensure competency development meets specific AF needs. The AFLC is a sub-panel under the FMDC.

Enclosure IV: Combat Skills Taught in ECS

The Navy's Expeditionary Combat Skills (ECS) program is a 20-day course that provides new Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) personnel with foundational combat skills training. The service conducted two pilots of the course in the fall of 2007, and it convened the first official course in March 2008. ECS combines classroom instruction with practical application and live-fire exercises that provide students with the opportunity to utilize the skills they learn under the supervision of their instructors. While ECS includes two noncombat skills topics, NECC organization, and safety and operational risk management, the majority of the course focuses on combat skills training. Combat skills topics account for 136 of the 138 total instructional hours of training at ECS, with some additional time allotted for testing and administrative functions. Table 4 lists the combat skills topics of instruction included in ECS, and examples of some corresponding subtopics.

Table 4: ECS combat skills topics of instruction

Topic of instruction	Examples of corresponding subtopics
Individual combat equipment	Procedures on how to prepare, wear, care, and maintain individual combat equipment, and training on camouflage, concealment, and cover
Basic expeditionary first aid	Knowledge and skills to treat life-threatening injuries encountered on the battlefield and facilitate the survivability of an injured patient
Land navigation	Compass operations, pace count, and procedures necessary to navigate with a military map and compass
Weapons	Safe handling and employment of assigned weapons as well as shooting and qualifying on each weapon
Vehicle emergency egress	Vehicle emergency escape procedures for a convoy under simulated enemy fire and during various ambush conditions as well as procedures for reorienting personnel and damaged vehicles
Basic military communications	Basic radio voice procedures, the fundamental operation of communication equipment, and radio authentication procedures
Counter improvised explosive device recognition	Characteristics and nomenclatures of mines and booby traps, visual indicators of an improvised explosive device, and appropriate reaction to a suspected improvised explosive device
Introduction to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear	Procedures required to survive in a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear environment as well as the inspection, maintenance, and donning of personal protective equipment
Combat mind set	Enemy combative mindset, mental conditioning and triggers, the process to control emotions, survival tactics, and the principles of personal defense
Judgment-based engagement training	Recognizing compliant and noncompliant threats and the appropriate level of force both legally and tactically

Source: NECC.

Enclosure V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgements

GAO Contact

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Acknowledgements

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